Exploring the innovative capacity of intergovernmental network managers: the art of boundary scanning and boundary spanning

Voets Joris
Public Management Institute, KU Leuven (Belgium) - joris.voets@soc.kuleuven.be

Filip De Rynck
Urban Policy Research Centre, University College Ghent (Belgium) - filip.derynck@hogent.be

Paper for EGPA 2008 - Workshop 2: Innovation in governing networks; institutional learning and leadership

Abstract
Intergovernmental problems are increasingly dealt with in policy networks. This paper explores how network management helps to innovate intergovernmental relations. The innovative potential is studied by analysing different network management strategies, identifying network managers and their main attributes, and defining a number of management roles, using two case studies.

Note
This text is based on research conducted within the frame of the Policy Research Centre on Governmental organization in Flanders (SBOV II - 2007-2011), funded by the Flemish government. The views expressed herein are those of the author(s) and not those of the Flemish government.

Introduction

Complexity of public policy-making and interdependencies between the public and private sector stimulate collaboration through policy networks[1]; the latter are said to become increasingly important for government (Teisman and Klijn 2002). Policy networks are based on resource dependencies between (semi-)autonomous actors, and driven by trust (Scharpf 1997). Policy networks do not develop spontaneously; they need to be triggered (March and Simon 1958) and managed actively (Huxham and Vangen 2005).

Policy networks are extensively studied, but their capacity in solving intergovernmental problems is not (Agranoff 2004). Intergovernmental networks are a specific type of policy networks, because the actors involved are different governments (as opposed to different governmental units only). As such, the distinctive character of intergovernmental networks is that they involve *"boundary spanning activities of distinctive units that possess territory, identity and ascribed powers"* (Agranoff 2008:1). So in IGR-networks, actors bring jurisdiction, position, and related resources to the table. In multi-level intergovernmental networks, there are also (semi-)hierarchic relations present based on the former, e.g. principal-agent relations between central and local government (i.e. an intergovernmental 'shadow of hierarchy', Scharpf 1997). In this paper, intergovernmental networks refer to such multi-level arrangements.

The main strand in IGR-literature dealing with intergovernmental collaboration is intergovernmental management (IGM). IGM is defined as *"the process of solving intergovernmental problems under conditions of high uncertainty and complexity through the creation and use of governmental and nongovernmental networks"* (Wright and Krane 1998:1162). The increased importance adhered to IGR-networks instigates IGR-scholars to shift the focus of research to the behaviour of the individuals involved in these networks. While the functioning of such networks is bound by institutional (e.g. formal-legalistic) factors, these are actively managed

[1] Policy networks are sets of horizontal relationships with a certain level of stability/endurance and structuring, between multiple and relatively autonomous actors faced with resource dependencies, involving processes of resource exchange through bargaining and negotiation, trying to achieve public purpose (Voets 2008:28).

[3] Methodological note: two single case studies referred to in this paper were carried out as part of a doctoral research project (Voets 2008). The case study data is based on a broad range of formal and informal documents and semi-structured interviews (27 interviews for case 'Project Gentse Kanaalzone' (PGK), period 10/2003-3/2004; 25 interviews for case 'Parkbos Gent' (PBG), period 2/2007-6/2007).

or even created by network managers. As such, IGM requires analysis of institutional and behavioural activities.

We assume that any innovative capacity of such networks is the outcome of a form of social engineering – broadly defined here as network management (Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan 1997; Klijn and Teisman 1997). The question dealt with in this paper therefore is: *How does network management (contribute to) innovative intergovernmental relations (IGR)?* Network management is discussed in terms of network management strategies (section 1), network managers and their attributes (section 2), and management roles (section 3). The paper concludes with some critical reflections.

This paper combines insights from intergovernmental relations literature and policy network studies. The different sections are illustrated with case study data of two Flemish IGR-networks (Voets 2008, case summaries in annex).[3]

1. Management strategies at work

Management of multi-actor settings differs from mono-organisational management, in terms of the context in which management activities take shape, strategies and instruments used, and capacities needed (see for instance Agranoff 2007; Agranoff and McGuire 2004; Mandell 1999; O'Toole and Meier 2004).

Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan (1997) sum up a broad range of strategies that network managers can deploy. Table 1 presents the set of management strategies, but these are not discussed in detail. The strategies are organized in boxes based on the level they are directed at (game or network), and on the points of intervention (interactions or ideas). The strategies are expected to contribute to the quality of the policy processes (e.g. keeping the process going, improving discussions or the way in which decision-making or the interaction between participants is organised) and products (e.g. learning, changing discourses, planning documents and decisions, 'physical' achievements in the field) in and of the network.

Table 1: Strategies for network management

	Game level	Network level
Strategies aimed at ideas/perceptions of actors	Covenanting Influencing perceptions Bargaining Development of common language Prevention of/introduction of ideas Furtherance of reflection	Reframing Changing formal policy
Strategies aimed at the interaction between actors	Selective (de-)activating Arranging Organizing confrontations Development of procedures Furtherance of facilitation, brokerage, mediation and arbitration	Network (de-)activating Constitutional reform: changing rules and resources (de-)coupling games Changing incentives Changing internal structure and position of actors Changing relations Management by chaos

(Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan 1997:170)

The first distinction is made between more operational management activities and more institutional management activities. The first level is the game level, in which the 'game management' is aimed at influencing the interaction processes between actors in a policy game[4], in a context where those that are managing consider the network structure as a constant. The second level is the network level, in which management is aimed at changing or altering features of the network itself. This 'network constitution' refers to all activities that are aimed at sustained changes in the network itself, as they redefine rules and change the distribution of resources, hence the 'meta-governance' of the network (Klijn 1996). Network constitution strategies try to influence the context or the action arena in which games between actors are played, while management at the game level tries to influence the ongoing processes within and through the network institution.

The second distinction is about whether management is aimed at substance or at process, namely trying to influence what becomes policy and ways to arrive at policy.

[4] Policy games are strategic interaction processes taking shape around issues (Kickert, Klijn and koppenjan 1997).

The use and usefulness of these management strategies is context-dependent: *"not all strategies are equally effective in every situation"* (Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan 1997:169).

Voets (2008) showed that – not withstanding the fact that a number of strategies are defined too broadly or overlap - their scheme to analyse network management is helpful to study intergovernmental relations. The set of network management strategies of Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan, developed as a generic set applicable to all kinds of policy networks, also provides a useful tool to map activities of network managers in a specific IGR-network context.

The application in our study however also learned how strategies are combined, how the motivation behind the strategies should be mapped as well, and how the set of instruments might be expanded. We discuss these three elements in the following paragraphs.

1.1. Combining strategies

While strategies can be singled out (to some extent), they are very often combined in practice. These combinations can be deployed simultaneously or in a sequential mode.

For instance, to influence perceptions of actors, the main network managers in both cases studied also organised confrontations. To feed the discussions, they introduced a number of ideas, using plans and graphics, but this was combined with bargaining about for instance the numbers of hectares per sector (e.g. how many hectares for economic purposes, for afforestation, for recreation, …).

Sometimes parallel, sometimes in a later stage, arranging[5] and constitutional reform[6] are used as well. Constitutional reform for instance is used to achieve the network agenda, and network managers try to arrange a formal network structure. To do so, in each case, they also try to activate an actor to take up the formal leadership of the network.

[5] Arranging essentially refers to creating, sustaining and changing ad hoc provisions which suit groups of interactions in a policy game (Klijn and Teisman 1997:110)
[6] A strategy aimed at changing the network conditions or the institutional context in which policy games are played.

These different strategies are not used or combined in a random or uncoordinated order; network managers actively organise and link these activities together. For instance, in developing a new organisational structure, they also try to use formal policy. In the PGK-case, the network managers among others lobbied successfully for new Flemish legislation allowing them to set up a formal advisory body for the focus area. In doing so, they also suggested a set of rules (e.g. composition, decision-making). In the PBG, network managers try to get the Flemish government to grant the network a formal status as a strategic project. Such a status also provides additional financial resources, and a way to activate the provincial governor to become the main network promoter.

1.2. Overcoming instrumentalism

The focus should not be put on the network management strategies only. Otherwise, the analysis risks to result in an overly managerial, technical, and instrumental view, perhaps typical for the Dutch network school. Our study reveals that the rationale behind instruments and techniques in most cases is inspired by 'political' motives, and it is the combination of both that gives instruments their real 'strategic' meaning. For that reason, analysis of the network management strategies should be linked to the strategic goals behind the strategies. Otherwise, it becomes very difficult to distinguish between network management and the complete array of actions taken by network participants. As network management is *"aimed at promoting joint problem solving or policy development"* (Kickert and Koppenjan 1997:43), one needs to look at the concrete goals that network managers try to achieve when using a management strategy.

In the cases studied, network management is at times administrative (e.g. practical organisation of meetings and reports), but seems highly political as they deal with redistributive and regulatory issues. As such, while many actions in both cases can be fit to the Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan typology, the motivation behind their use is important to map as well (and might lead to a different typology). Their typology maps the management strategies according to their 'external' logic, while the 'internal' logic within the network and the logic of the network managers should be

the first step for an adequate understanding of the motives behind their use. Network management therefore should include a political perspective, which can also result in adding a number of strategies to the typology.

An important, more political network management strategy, is for instance coalition building. In the PBG-case, the proponents of afforestation consciously built a coalition with other sectoral interests to isolate the farmers who were going to lose farmland to (be transformed into) woods. This coalition building was successful because the network managers linked different policy games, grounding their afforestation ambitions in a larger package deal which could not be opened up anymore in the final stage of decision-making at the Flemish level. In doing so, the network managers consciously kept the agricultural administration out of the network, and only allowed another administration suspected to serve farmers' interests to play a secondary role.

A second, parallel strategy used in the PBG-case was to create pressure to ensure that politicians would not halt the planning process at some point (for instance because of protest of farmers) by mobilising the general public through various forms of communication. The general public was activated not only to create pressure, but also in an attempt to change the perceptions of decision-makers about the need to create more woods. Part of this strategy included the activation of an NGO with a mission to create more woods in Flanders.

By adding network management strategies like coalition-building and pressure creation, network management analysis becomes more considerate of the political dimension of and in networks, and of the political strategy inspiring the network managers. This could lead us to a more broad and less instrumental interpretation of management strategies, based upon an in-depth analysis of the rationales in the network itself.

1.3. Covert action

The focus on the actual goals of network management in the two cases also shows that many strategies are deployed covertly. Network managers face a dilemma.

They are expected to embody the collaborative spirit of the network and to manage in the interest of the network agenda as a whole (or at least to arrive at one to begin with). But to achieve success, some management activities required are manipulative, coercive, and rather sneaky (Huxham and Vangen 2005:66).

There is a constant tension between manipulative behaviour which at times can be appropriate, versus the spirit of collaborative working. In the cases studied, actors for instance are activated and de-activated using coercive power (using political influence to order a governmental unit to leave or to join in). Some actors are not allowed full play by the network managers, other actors are kept out strategically. Some actors are activated only to avoid negative power play of another actor. Network managers in both cases strictly control the meeting agenda, not only in terms of process but also in terms of substance. As such, the management activities are only partially open and collaborative, part of it is not and remains backstage. To analyse this dark or covert side of network management, in-depth interviewing proves a crucial research method.

2. Managers and their attributes: what determines innovative capacity?

By studying management activities in a network, one can also discern who carries out such activities. As the focus is on intergovernmental networks, the particular interest is in the network management activities of public officials and the way those activities shape intergovernmental relations. This section focuses on the main managers, and a number of attributes that are typical for the intergovernmental network managers in the cases studied. These attributes seem to be conditions for innovation.

2.1. Managers: who is who?

Typically in networks, there is no single manager (Agranoff 2007). Network management activities are deployed by both public and private actors: executive/legislative politicians, civil servants from agencies/departments, technocrats/generalists, private actors, or a mix of such actors (Huxham and

Vangen 2005; Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan 1997). Management often is the result of these joined efforts. 'Joined' then does not necessarily mean that this is the result of deliberate or rationally inspired cooperation. It can also be the product of loosely coupled activities of managers acting individually at different levels and at different positions in the network.

In the cases studied, network management is the work of informal network teams joining local, provincial and Flemish governmental actors. Excepting the project coordinator in the first network (explicitly hired to manage the operational side of the network) and the consultants, in both networks the main network managers are self-appointed. Informal network teams (i.e. two 'network cores') set up the network in the early rounds, controlling (most of) network management throughout the process. The policy impact of the network management team is therefore substantial (but certainly not exclusive). As they lack an official or formal leadership or management position, their potential for network management is directly dependent on the degree of acceptance of their activities by the other actors.

These teams, whose members coordinate their strategies and play different roles (see below) produce intergovernmental cocktails. Some are mainly network champions ('the spiders in the intergovernmental web'); others take up a network promoting role, or provide creative input. The intergovernmental cocktails consist of ingredients derived from different governmental tiers, policy sectors, policy instruments, and are drawn from the political and administrative realm (including political parties). As such, a generic capacity to function in networks is required by all network managers, but they can have different specialized skills to do so.

In both case studies, administrative officials (e.g. project coordinator, the head of the provincial environmental administration, the provincial governor) are at the heart of the network management. Their actions represent the bulk of network management. Consultants (mainly in terms of know-how and expertise) and politicians (to ensure that political decisions are acquired) seem to take up a more supportive role. The central position of administrative officials however should be read with caution; this might be attributed to the fact that their actions are less covert than for instance those of politicians or private interests. So while the role

of administrative officials in network management is stressed here, the politicians should not be discarded or degraded to a secondary role.

The prominent position of administrative officials however can create conflicts with politicians that feel threatened in their position, and in their ability to present themselves. Some actors also feel that the main network managers sometimes deploy activities considered as political and unfit for civil servants. Some politicians feel that such strategic planning processes take away their autonomy to make political deals. They call for the 'primacy of politics' to take ad hoc decisions as they see fit, without linking them to collaborative networks. Such politicians are very weary of engaging in long term and multi-actor policy processes, because it ties their hands to act ad hoc, to serve their clients; it hampers their freedom to wheal and deal, to make party political package deals. While politicians with this ratio are found at all levels, it seems that this is a key feature at the level of the Flemish ministerial cabinets[7] – precisely where the main resources needed by both networks are situated.

2.2. Managerial attributes

The study of managerial behaviour reveals some basic attributes or personal skills which seem to be crucial for effective management of complex processes in IGR-settings. Those attributes are essential conditions for innovation. We organise our findings into three topics: passion and determination, skills and capacities, and finally (and maybe most importantly) the capability to act and behave in the grey zone of the boundaries between autonomous governmental units. 'Working at the boundaries' could be another definition of network management, and such boundary management is probably one of the most fertile soils for innovation.

[7] In Belgium, federal and regional ministers have personal staff called 'cabinets' at their disposal. These cabinets consist of political staff members and policy experts regarding the ministers' competences (up to 50 people or more). Staff members are often associated with the same political party as the minister. Frequently, civil servants are attached to a cabinet for a period of office. On a smaller scale, such cabinets also exist in cities.

Passion and determination

The ownership of the main intergovernmental boundary spanners[8] is linked to mission-driven endeavours (Agranoff 2005:19). The network managers in both cases are genuinely convinced about the necessity and the way to achieve the network agenda. As such, their network management activities are not just a matter of professionalism, but also fuelled by personal beliefs. In the cases studied, they are (mainly) men with a mission. It also requires a high level of resilience, and patience: achieving both network agendas takes many years.

Interestingly, the passion and determination in both networks is also fuelled by the roots of the actors involved. Politicians in Flanders are known to have a special interest for their locality and serving local interest at the central level ('political localism'). However, civil servants at provincial and Flemish level are also driven by a local (in both cases 'Ghent') reflex, which might be labelled administrative localism. As such, network managers in an intergovernmental context can also be motivated by the ability to do something for 'their' locality.

Skills and capacities

Being passionate about the network and determined to achieve success is not sufficient; the right combination of skills and capacities is needed to create the required intergovernmental policy mix. Intergovernmental collaboration demands actors that can tolerate but also use high levels of complexity and uncertainty in function of the network agenda.

Intergovernmental network managers seem able to navigate through the pea-soup that the amalgamation of policies, interests, actors, relations, tiers, and contingencies is for an outsider (and for some insiders). As Thoenig (2005) argued, a highly fragmented public space with many tiers and actors induces governmental

[8] Paraphrasing Sullivan and Skelcher (2002:100), intergovernmental boundary spanners are individuals who exhibit the necessary combination of skills and attributes for intergovernmental collaboration. From their formal position in the arena, they develop political and bureaucratic strategies to link governmental actors across the horizontal, vertical, intragovernmental, and politico-administrative divide, and link up with relevant private stakeholders.

competition, but provides excellent opportunities for actors that can deal with such complexity.

They are not network super heroes with special powers, but they combine their institutional positions and a drive to achieve success with personal skills. Paraphrasing one of the interviewees, these actors play in the intergovernmental champions' league. Weberian bureaucrats for instance are not able to play in that league. They are too dependent on features of a rational governing system, while networks demand the capacity to match rational and political views on policy-making. The challenge for network managers is to match long term perspectives with private interests and politicians who are often more concerned with immediate action and short term results.

For network managers, there is also an element what might be called 'the fun factor'. The network managers in both cases simply love dealing with high levels of complexity and uncertainty; they get a kick out of trying to accomplish successful intergovernmental coordination, and they consider the networks as a personal learning environment. So while network managers require a particular set of skills and capacities, they also learn by doing.

Scanning and spanning boundaries

To manage networks successfully, actors have to scan and span boundaries of governmental tiers, politics and administration, public and private sector, different policy sectors, … In this respect, the way network management is at the crossroads of politics and administration proves to be of particular interest in the cases studied.

In both cases studied, the administrative officials as key managers not just implement policies, they actively co-produce policy and strategies to achieve them, including strategies towards political actors and the use of party political channels. Instead of politicians setting out the strategic policy objectives and putting administrative officials to work to implement them, the praxis is even more the other way around. Administrative officials develop strategic policy objectives,

and try to pull the strings of competent politicians to get the required decisions and resources. The strategy of administrative officials to 'employ' political officials is said to be relatively successful. A number of politicians have no problem with the proactive behaviour of administrative officials, and adhere to the strategic planning processes as developed in the networks. They form alliances with civil servants to achieve certain policy outcomes. They also believe in the value of the way both networks forward a long term vision and action programme for the focus areas.

Both networks studied try to develop a policy focused on the locality, but are also concerned with acquiring resources, often located outside the network. To do so, the network managers create and use professional, personal, and party political contacts. They also indicate that this is the only way to achieve success; limiting themselves to a traditional bureaucratic role is not an option. According to the network managers, the governmental praxis in Flanders (i.e. a very crowded institutional and highly politicized, partytocratic, clientelist arena, imbued with political localism) demands administrative officials to take up a more active and 'political' role if they are to achieve results.

By trial and error, a number of administrative officials develop strategic insights about political power and the necessity to use it to implement 'their' networks and 'their' (prize-winning) planning processes. Administrative officials are confronted with politics, as stakes of issues are high, resources scarce, and politicians ultimately have decision-making power. The administrative officials learned that they needed politics to avoid the network of hollowing out or reducing 'their' policy to a virtual one. The administrative officials learned the need to match their policy ambitions with the political game.

In doing so, the network managers developed a set of antennas that are 'politically sensitive' and are aware of the risk that politicians might feel surpassed. Generally speaking, they are able to scan the boundaries between the political and administrative realm and have been very prudent in spanning both. The network managers do not discard or bypass the political processes/politicians in policy processes; they actively deal with it and also team up with political officials to get decisions. Such collaboration between civil servants and politicians cuts across

intergovernmental and sectoral divides. In the PGK, for instance, a local alderman competent for urban planning teams up with a provincial civil servant of an environmental administration, the provincial governor, and a Flemish cabinet member competent for port affairs.

The direct participation of local and provincial politicians in the networks ensures that politicians can also put their eggs in the network baskets. However, if one moves up to the Flemish ladder, the lack of political interest and involvement makes the Flemish side a mainly administrative role. As a result, local and provincial public officials need to team up – often in coalition with Flemish administrative officials - to acquire access to the political realm at the level of the Flemish government.

In the PGK, administrative officials focus increasingly on politics as the networks progress. This is also the result of their experiences in the early rounds. In the early rounds, paraphrasing Flyvbjerg (1998:160), the administrative officials to a certain extent tried to eliminate politics through a rational process of strategic planning. In the PBG, learning by actors who were also involved in the first network, in combination with the salience and redistributive character of issues, however led to a more permanent political focus.

It is important to note that the distinction between politicians and civil servants in Flanders is at times diffuse. A number of experienced administrative officials involved in both networks for instance also worked on ministerial cabinets. They claim that close interactions with politicians are a necessity. As temporary cabinet members, civil servants for instance organise political interactions to arrive at certain decisions. In this respect, the network managers themselves can have an ambiguous position, but such mobility between both realms can also provide them with a stronger capacity to scan and span boundaries.

In the Flemish context, the provincial governor has such a potential 'scan and span' capacity, as he is a former politician appointed as a civil servant, located at the crossroads of all governmental tiers. In the PGK, the governor acts as an important

interface between the political and administrative realm at different governmental tiers. He is an active social-democrat, but his institutional position is in the administrative realm. He proves to be the main intergovernmental connector between both realms at different tiers. In the PBG-case, the main network managers hope to bring in the provincial governor for similar purposes.

In both networks, it is clear that the intergovernmental and multi-sectoral nature of the networks demand a broad array of formal and informal contacts between politicians and administrative officials. The informal position of both networks also warrants an ad hoc way of interactions between both. In the end however, politicians decide whether or not to push policy buttons and in what direction (e.g. in deciding the allocation of the budget). As such, while the more visible (or apparently high level of) activity of administrative officials in managing the network might lead to the neglect of the role of politicians, the activities of the latter have to be taken into account as well.

Hence, while there is much intergovernmental boundary scanning and spanning going on, such activities do not change the boundaries of the state; they change the boundaries within the state. The networks become a world of their own within the government system: they join actors in a project- and area-based logic, which gradually – alternating between periods of rapid development, slow progress or even decline – becomes a system with a proper agenda, a distinctive culture and ways to meet and interactions, debating methods, and the like. In that 'virtual' world - which is heavily linked to the 'real' world outside the network – a dynamic is created that provokes intergovernmental boundary spanning.

3. Innovative management roles

Based on the analysis of management activities and managers in the networks and inspired by earlier work of Agranoff (2003), a fivefold role typology is forwarded at this point. It seems that the main network managers each have their 'specialisation' in terms of strategies used. Innovative behaviour at the different levels of the networks is related to these different management roles: innovation at the more administrative or operational level, at the level of concepts, the level

of strategy or methods,… Planning consultants for instance are most active in strategies that try to influence ideas and perceptions (e.g. developing a common language, framing and reframing perceptions of actors, organising confrontations, and covenanting). Some administrative officials focus dominantly on shaping the interactions or relations between actors.

Five distinct roles can be discerned: network operator, network champion, network promoter (or 'tractor actor'), creative thinker, and vision keeper. These roles are now developed in more detail.

3.1. Network operator

A 'network operator' is a person - e.g. a project manager - that is responsible for the daily management of the network: preparing documents for meetings, following up on the operations of different working groups, managing the website and databases. He/she functions as a secretariat taking care of all the administrative aspects of the arrangement, and takes care of the day-to-day management. However, the network operator is not limited to administrative functions only; he is for instance also the main contact for and communicator between actors in- and outside the arrangement.

At first sight, the network operator is not an innovative role, and very similar to a traditional administrator's role. The innovative capacity however is that such an administration of intergovernmental networks does not likely to exist otherwise. In traditional IGR, administrators are located in their proper governmental tier, controlling or negotiating with others, but not managing the relations from a collective, network perspective. The latter also requires different skills: the ability to understand the substance of the process, to tune and navigate between different actors' agenda's and policy cycle stages of different governmental tiers. As such, they have to try to maintain a workable overlay, within the constraints set by the formal institutional make-up.

In the PGK-case, there is a full time network operator at work. Interestingly, the operator is a former representative of one of the actors. His track record (having

served in different positions in- and outside government) also enabled him to join the attributes discussed in the previous section, like for instance linking different policy cycles to one another and forwarding precise timings for policy products and decisions required. In the PBG-case, this function was not a formal one. Over time, several actors took up this role on a more informal basis.

3.2. Network champion

Similar to Agranoff's (2003) notion, a 'network champion' is understood here as an actor that excels in networking in terms of building, maintaining and using connections with other actors at all levels and of all backgrounds. A 'network champion' excels in networking at personal, professional and party political levels; he/she is the spider in the arrangements' web. The collaborative network champion has a heart for the network agenda (as opposed to other highly networked actors that only strive for an individual agenda). To be called a network champion in relation to network management, the networking needs to be focused primarily on achieving network goals.

The innovative capacity of the network champion lies in networking capabilities across tiers, sectors, and the politico-administrative divide. Without much formal resources to do so, the creation of a network arena (that however also might be institutionalised in or based on formal relations) provides an intergovernmental coordination potential in its own right, in terms of relations. Compared to traditional IGR, the formal-legalistic relations are explicitly combined with social relations in function of a joint agenda.

In the case studies, the main network champion is the same person. By joining personal, professional and party political levels, politically backed by the provincial governor, he was not only able to figure out the desired intergovernmental configuration, but also to actively link actors together.

3.3. Network promoter (or 'tractor actor')

Somewhat diverging from Agranoff's (2003) definition, a 'network promoter' is defined here as an actor that is considered authoritative, accepted by all actors as a principal (in moral terms, not in terms of power or hierarchy) which leads the participating actors towards the common goals. He holds a position of trust and is also the one to which actors' direct grievances or concerns. He tries to keep things together at a general level and is the one that is expected to appease conflicts. If necessary, this actor might even 'sanction' network members (but again, based on a moral authority, based on trust and informal acceptance, granted to him by the stakeholders, rather than based on a hierarchic position). He is the active chair of the network, accepted by most/all actors as authoritative, perceived neutral, capable of keeping the process on route. In an intergovernmental network, he is also a go-between for local, provincial and Flemish government. As such, he promotes the network intergovernmentally.

While network champions create the necessary linkages between governmental tiers, sectors, and politics and administration, and network operators use this set to organise the networks' operations, the added value of the network promoter is to carry the weight of the network. The network promoter is able to overcome the different cultures and attitudes present in governmental and policy silos, and keep the representatives in a workable mode. He is able to capture the conflict between governmental actors, acting as a guardian of the intergovernmental catchment area or border region that any intergovernmental network presents. In this respect, he helps to innovate IGR by introducing a (new kind of) intergovernmental leadership respecting the equality of levels, mainly based on informal and personal characteristics.

In the PGK-case, the provincial governor lead the project and its operations without having much hierarchical power or formal competences to do so (although his institutional position puts him at the crossroads of local, provincial, and central government). He has a substantial moral weight, great moral authority. The governor is considered to lack a clearly identifiable interest and is therefore in a privileged position to do so. In the formal moments of the network, like meetings of the steering committee, he chairs meetings based on notes and support of the

project office, consultants, and provincial department head. The latter does much of the groundwork for meetings but is very active in terms of organising the resources and rules, and the constitutional reform of the network. He manages in tandem with the governor. Backstage, the governor is said to be engaged actively in playing party political channels to achieve results. In the PBG-case, the main flaw identified by the network managers is precisely the lack of such a network promoter who can 'control' the inner arena of the network and promote the network in the outer arena.

3.4. Creative thinker

A 'creative thinker' is an actor that has no stake in the focus area or regarding the issues at the table, and hence is 'free' to give creative input. These actors deliver impeachable expertise, develop concepts, models, and plans, visualise ideas, produce tools and the like to build 'groupware'[10], to induce consensus, and the like. They actively try to frame and reframe actors' mindsets, to forward innovative and joint concepts to incorporate different interests, and the like. The creative thinker however can also play a role on the level of interactions, and take up a 'network coaching'-role for instance in terms of quick wins, or identifying strengths and weaknesses of actors.

The creative thinkers are actors that help to innovate IGR in terms of ideas and interactions, for instance by proposing new tools, instruments, structures, resources, etc. The decision to bring in those creative thinkers itself is already a moment of innovation, while they in turn can activate the innovative potential of the IGR-network (in terms of both substance and process, at game and network level).

As the cases are focused strongly on issues of spatial planning, planning consultants are the main 'creative thinker'. They intervened for instance by presenting new ways of looking at problems and at the area at stake. The introduced new spatial

[10] Groupware is *"group development that reaches mutual understanding and transcends hierarchy-based communication/interaction that allows multiple cultures, procedures, and divisions of labor to come together"* (Agranoff 2007:213).

concepts of thinking and looking, and thereby influenced ideas and interactions, at game and network level.

Interestingly, they are also able to present intergovernmental linkages, especially in terms of substance, because they carry out studies and projects for many actors involved in the network at different tiers (e.g. the city of Ghent, Flemish planning administration). As a result, they can create substantive links between plans or documents, but also have some power to link different policy processes more strongly. They furthermore suggested ways to jointly manage the focus areas, ways to finance the network agenda, or what should be put into legislation. As such, they present an additional governmental capacity that is otherwise not deployed (or not in the same way) for intergovernmental relations.

3.5. Vision keeper

Apart from these four roles, which can be joined in single actors but are more likely brought together in an informal or formal network management team, a fifth role can be defined. Similar to Agranoff's (2003) notion, a 'vision keeper' is an actor in- or outside the network that - for whatever reason – is/becomes a strong 'believer' in the networks added value. These actors are concerned with the progress of the collective, rather than looking only at their direct organisational interest. If these actors feel that the network tends to go in a different direction than the joint agenda set out, they will act (or at least communicate this to the other network managers). These actors are also activated by the main network managers if their assistance is needed. This separates them from stakeholders or network participants who have a more narrow approach to the network and only focus on what they perceive to be their own direct organisational goals.

These vision keepers can be public officials, but non-public actors can take up this role as well. In intergovernmental terms, their innovative capacity is to transcend the tendency to focus on a single organisation, sector, or tier, without necessarily being part of the network and/or taking up a very active part in the network management. The vision keepers also act as sounding boards for network managers

playing other roles. While network champions, network operators, network promoter, or creative thinkers might loose sight of the bigger picture because of their time-consuming management activities or run the risk of going ahead without reflecting on their actions, the vision keeper helps to ensure reflexivity.

In the cases studied, vision keepers are actors that were mostly heavily involved in early rounds, but who switched positions or are no longer at the core of the network management. As such, in both networks a number of actors shifted from one role to another as the networks progressed.

These five roles can be combined in single persons, but analysing their network strategies show that actors are often 'specialised' in one of them (without necessarily being appointed to do so, or being perceived as such). The presence and successful combination of these roles contributes to intergovernmental capacity-building, offering better prospect to achieve coordination and overcome governmental fragmentation (Agranoff 2008:11).

Conclusions

The previous section have shown how network management helps to innovate intergovernmental relations, who is managing to do so, what main attributes they have/require, and that different roles can be discerned. The focus was put strongly on the behavioural activities of individuals in concrete networks. In doing so, the paper might have created a picture of 'network super heroes', a small set of mainly public actors that shape intergovernmental interactions in networks as they see fit. It is however clear that this is not the case, as they have to manage in a rigid, and diffuse institutional landscape, featuring a high number of contingencies. The potential for network management to innovate IGR is dependent on a wide range of structural or institutional variables, too broad to be dealt with in this paper.

The potential of network management to innovate intergovernmental relations is nevertheless clear. It helps to make IGR multilateral, collaborative and to combine a wide range of policy issues (as opposed to bilateral intergovernmental

transactions between governments). Network management offers a better prospect to achieve coordination and overcome governmental fragmentation, and stimulates more collaborative than competitive intergovernmental relations. It also contributes to intergovernmental capacity-building. Through network management, an arena to 'capture' conflict between governmental actors can be created (Agranoff 2008:11; Loughlin 2007). Finally, paraphrasing Loughlin (2007:393), it helps to achieve informal political and administrative decentralization. The informal political decentralization implies that the IGR-networks take up a policy role without formal powers to do so. The administrative decentralization refers to the fact that IGR-networks join a range of administrations that are expected to incorporate the network operations in their day-to-day praxis.

We used the two-level framework of Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan (1997) to start our analysis, and suggested some important amendments to their approach by putting network management strategies in a more political perspective. In doing so, these strategies get their real, network-bound, and internal meaning and effects. We consider this as a necessity for the study of IGR-networks: management of networks is also about power, coalition building, bargaining, making compromises, playing with concepts and the strategic input of experts.

A main conclusion is that this kind of innovative 'political' behaviour makes up the core of the roles of public officials as managers of the two IGR-networks studied. This innovation can be developed in the boundary zone between autonomous governments taking part in networks. Put differently: the existence of the grey zone of boundary spanning and boundary scanning stimulates innovation.

Innovation then is related to the features of boundary work: the capacities of and for motivated network managers who can think and act strategically flourish when and where roles are mixed up, where actors develop in a new setting, and when perceptions, goals and strategies of actors meet. It is this mix of institutional and personal features that increases the possibilities to introduce innovation in intergovernmental networks.

Annex: case 'Project Gentse Kanaalzone' (PGK)

PGK is an ongoing strategic planning process (started in 1993) in the Flemish part of the area surrounding the canal Ghent-Terneuzen. The issues are complex: intense economic activities in the maritime-industrial canal area are joined by considerable environmental nuisance. Historically, a number of residential areas are present in the area. The parallel and uncoordinated development of housing and economic activities resulted in an entanglement of both, leading to increased pressure on the area.

The main objective of PGK is to reconcile both functions through an integrated approach with participation of the relevant actors in the focus area. The PGK wants to improve the environmental qualities and increase economic development prospects by reducing pollution of soil, water and air, by increasing the quality of living by infrastructural interventions (e.g. developing buffer zones between housing and industry), linking residential areas, intervening in the flows of traffic in the area (decoupling residential and economic traffic), expropriating housing in unliveable areas, by developing and reorganising water-, road-, and railways, and relocating companies. Such a development should be coordinated through a joint vision on the future development of the canal area.

Main network members are three local governments, provincial government, dozens of governmental units of Flemish government, Dutch governments, citizen groups, companies, interest groups, consultants, and political parties.

Policy sectors involved are economy, spatial planning, public infrastructure (roads and water), and the environment.

Annex: case ‘Parkbos Gent’ (PBG)

PBG is an ongoing policy process (started in 1996) to develop a multifunctional park in the south of the urban region of Ghent. The issues and ambitions in the focus area are complex; it is an open landscape, pressured by the urbanisation in the greater Ghent region. There are different claims (heritage, science park, agriculture, recreation, housing, nature, …), and these claims need to be matched with the ambition of a number of actors to achieve a substantial afforestation in the focus area (250 to 300 hectares as part of Flemish policy).

The network focused much of its energy in developing and implementing a legal spatial plan that could accommodate different interests, without diverging from the goal of a number of actors of a substantial afforestation.

Main network members are three local governments, provincial government, dozens of governmental units of Flemish government, interest groups, and consultants.

Policy sectors involved are economy, spatial planning, agriculture, recreation, and the environment.

References

Agranoff, Robert. 2008. 'Toward an Emergent Theory of IGR Governance at the Dawn of the Network Era'. Paper presented at the ASPA-EGPA 4th Transatlantic Dialogue (4TAD), Milan, Italy, June 12-14, 2008

Agranoff, Robert. 2007. *Managing Within Networks: Adding Value to Public Organizations*. Washington: Georgetown University Press.

Agranoff, Robert. 2005. Managing Collaborative Performance: Changing the Boundaries of the State? *Public Performance and Management Review* 29 (1): 18-45.

Agranoff, Robert. 2004. Researching Intergovernmental Relations. *Journal of Public Administration, Research and Theory* 14 (4):443-446.

Agranoff, Robert, and Michael McGuire. 2004. Another Look at Bargaining and Negotiating in Intergovernmental Management. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 14 (4):495-512.

Flyvbjerg, Bent. 1998. *Rationality and Power. Democracy in Practice.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Huxham, Chris, and Siv Vangen. 2005. *Managing to Collaborate. The theory and practice of collaborative advantage*. London: Routledge.

Kickert, Walter J.M., Erik-Hans Klijn, and Joop F.M. Koppenjan. 1997b. Managing Networks in the Public Sector: Findings and Reflections. In *Managing complex networks. Strategies for the public sector*, eds Walter J.M. Kickert, Erik-Hans Klijn, and Joop F.M. Koppenjan, 166-191. London: Sage.

Kickert, Walter J.M., and Joop F.M. Koppenjan. 1997. Public Management and Network Management: An Overview. In *Managing complex networks. Strategies for the public sector*, eds Walter J.M. Kickert, Erik-Hans Klijn, and Joop F.M. Koppenjan, 35-61. London: Sage.

Klijn, Erik-Hans and Geert R. Teisman. 1997. Strategies and Games in Networks. In *Managing complex networks. Strategies for the public sector*, eds Walter J.M. Kickert, Erik-Hans Klijn, and Joop F.M. Koppenjan, 98-118. London: Sage.

Klijn, Erik-Hans. 1996. Analysing and managing policy processes in complex networks: a theoretical examination of the concept policy networks and its problems, *Administration and Society* 289 (1):90-119.

Loughlin, John. 2007. Reconfiguring the State: Trends in Territorial Governance in European States, *Regional and Federal Studies*, 17 (4): 385-404.

Mandell, Myrna P. 1999. The Impact of Collaborative Efforts: Changing the Face of Public Policy through Networks and Network Structures, *Policy Studies Review* 16 (1):4-17.

March, James G. and Herbert A. Simon. 1958. *Organizations*, New York: John Wiley.

O'Toole, Laurence J., Jr., and Kenneth J. Meier. 2004. Public Management in Intergovernmental Networks: Matching Structural and Behavioral Networks, *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 14 (4): 469-494.

Scharpf, Fritz W. 1997. *Games real Actors Play. Actor-Centered Institutionalism in Policy Research.* Boulder: Westview Press.

Sullivan, Helen, and Christopher K. Skelcher. 2002. *Working Across Boundaries. Collaboration in Public Services*. Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan.

Teisman, Geert R., and Erik-Hans Klijn. 2002. Partnership arrangements: governmental rhetoric or governance scheme?, *Public Administration Review* 62 (2):197-205.

Thoenig, Jean-Claude. 2005. Territorial administration and political control: decentralization in France, *Public Administration* 83 (3):685-708.

Voets, Joris. 2008. *Intergovernmental relations in multi-level arrangements: Collaborative public management in Flanders*. Leuven: KU Leuven.

Wright, Deil S., and Dale Krane. 1998. *Intergovernmental management.* In *International Encyclopedia of Public Policy and Administration*. Vol. 2, ed Jay M. Shafritz, 1162-1168. Bolder: Westview Press.